



San Luis Obispo County Drug and Alcohol Advisory Board

Methamphetamine Position Statement Adopted January 11, 2007

Methamphetamine is an extremely addictive, illegal drug that has become a serious problem in San Luis Obispo County. It is easily manufactured from common household products, making it relatively inexpensive and widely available. The properties of the drug appear to make it attractive to a somewhat different demographic group of users that includes more young people and more women. Nationwide, women are reporting methamphetamine use at rates close to or greater than those reported by men. In San Luis Obispo County during fiscal year 2005-2006, forty-eight percent of women and thirty-four percent of men who were admitted to drug treatment programs reported methamphetamine as their drug of choice. In the county's Proposition 36 program, fifty-seven percent of the participants stated that methamphetamine was their drug of choice—slightly higher than the statewide average of fifty-five percent.

Use of the drug can lead to serious health and legal problems for the user and a host of economic and social problems for the community. Recent testimony before the California Senate Select Committee on Methamphetamine Abuse noted that long-term, frequent use may lead to “addiction; violent behavior; anxiety; depression; confusion; insomnia; psychotic features including paranoia, auditory hallucinations and delusions; rapid heart rate; irregular heartbeat; increased blood pressure; irreversible stroke producing damage to small blood vessels in the brain; and death from overdoses.”

Within the community, a high percentage of crimes are drug-related, with well over half specifically attributable to methamphetamine use. Of the current cases active in the child welfare system, thirty-six percent are associated with methamphetamine use on the part of the parents. In the Nipomo area, the number jumps to fifty-five percent. The Drug and Alcohol Advisory Board has previously made its concerns known regarding the impact of perinatal substance abuse in this county, and it is disturbing to note that, of the women who were pregnant at the time that they entered drug treatment programs in the county, seventy-three percent reported using methamphetamine.

Those who abuse methamphetamine can be successfully treated in appropriate drug treatment programs with about the same rate of positive outcomes as those who abuse other substances. However, treatment of methamphetamine users requires a longer, more intense program for success. While San Luis Obispo County is prepared to provide appropriate treatment to methamphetamine users, the number of those who need treatment is large and services will need to expand. In addition to the expansion of available treatment options, the

Drug and Alcohol Services Advisory Board recommends that prevention efforts be increased, particularly those targeting the most at risk populations—females and teenagers.